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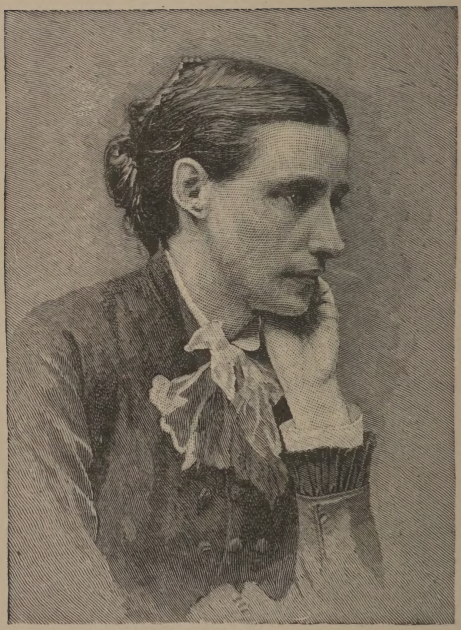

SONGS OF THE SILENT WORLD

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

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Dear! Is the distance vast? I cross it here.
The chasm fathomless? I span it thus.
The silence dread? I break it. What is fear?
When only our own hearts can sever us.

The gold and frankincense I should have given,
Envy the myrrh I lay within your hand;
Dearer to me than fame of earth or heaven
It is, to know that you will understand.

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I.

SONGS OF THE SILENT WORLD.

AFTERWARD.

THERE *is* no vacant chair. The loving meet —
A group unbroken — smitten, who knows how?
One sitteth silent only, in his usual seat;
We gave him once that freedom. Why not now?

Perhaps he is too weary, and needs rest;
He needed it too often, nor could we
Bestow. God gave it, knowing how to do so best.
Which of us would disturb him? Let him be.

There is no vacant chair. If he will take
The mood to listen mutely, be it done.
By his least mood we crossed, for which the heart must ache,
Plead not nor question! Let him have this one.

Death is a mood of life. It is no whim
By which life's Giver mocks a broken heart.
Death is life's reticence. Still audible to Him,
The hushed voice, happy, speaketh on, apart.

There is no vacant chair. To love is still
To have. Nearer to memory than to eye,
And dearer yet to anguish than to comfort, will
We hold him by our love, that shall not die.

For while it doth not, thus he cannot. Try!
Who can put out the motion or the smile?

The old ways of being noble all with him laid by?

Because we love, he is. Then trust awhile.

RELEASED.

Oh, joy of the dying!
At last thou art mine.
And leaping to meet thee,
Impatient to greet thee,
A rapid and rapturous, sensitive, fine
Gayety steals through my pulses to-day,
Daring and doubting like pleasure
Forbidden, or Winter looking at May.

Oh, sorrow of living!
Make way for the thrill
Of the soul that is starting —
Onlooking — departing
Across the threshold of clay.
Bend, bow to the will
Of the soul that is up and away!

THE ROOM'S WIDTH.

I THINK if I should cross the room,
Far as fear;
Should stand beside you like a thought —
Touch you, Dear!

Like a fancy. To your sad heart
It would seem
That my vision passed and prayed you,
Or my dream.

Then you would look with lonely eyes —
Lift your head —
And you would stir, and sigh, and say —
"She is dead."

Baffled by death and love, I lean
Through the gloom.
O Lord of life! am I forbid
To cross the room?

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS APART.

The shadows watch about the house;
Silent as they, I come.
Oh, it is true that life is deaf,
And not that death is dumb.

The Christmas thrill is on the earth,
The stars throb in the sky.
Love listens in a thousand homes,—
The Christmas bells ring by.

I cross the old familiar door
And take the dear old chair.
You look with desolated eyes
Upon me sitting there.

You gaze and see not, though the tears
In gazing burn and start.
Believe, the living are the blind,
Not that the dead depart.

A year ago some words we said
  Kept sacred 'twixt us twain,
'T is you, poor Love, who answer not,
  The while I speak again.

I lean above you as before,
  Faithful, my arms enfold.
Oh, could you know that life is numb,
  Nor think that death is cold!

Senses of earth, how weak ye are!
  Joys, joys of Heaven how strong!
Loves of the earth, how short and sad,
  Of Heaven how glad and long!

Heart of my heart! if earth or Heaven
  Had speech or language fine
Enough, or death or life could give
  Me symbol, sound, or sign

To reach you — thought, or touch, or eye,
  Body or soul — I 'd die
Again, to make you understand:
  My darling! This is *I!*

THE ANGEL JOY.

Oh, was it a death-dream not dreamed through,
That eyed her like a foe?
Or only a sorrow left over from life,
Half-finished years ago?

How long was it since she died — who told?
Or yet what was death — who knew?
She said: "I am come to Heaven at last,
And I'll do as the blessèd do."

But the custom of earth was stronger than Heaven,
And the habit of life than death,
How should an anguish as old as thought
Be healed by the end of breath?

Tissue and nerve and pulse of her soul
Had absorbed the disease of woe.

The strangest of all the angels there
Was Joy. (Oh, the wretched know !)

"I am too tired with earth," she said,
"To rest me in Paradise.
Give me a spot to creep away,
And close my heavy eyes.

"I must learn to be happy in Heaven," she said,
"As we learned to suffer below." —
"Our ways are not your ways," he said,
"And ours the ways you go."

As love, too wise for a word, puts by
All a woman's weak alarms,
Joy hushed her lips, and gathered her
Into his mighty arms.

He took her to his holy heart,
And there — for he held her fast —
The saddest spirit in the world,
Came to herself at last.

"ABSENT!"[1]

You do not lift your eyes to watch
  Us pass the conscious door;
Your startled ear perceiveth not
  Our footfall on the floor;
No eager word your lips betray
  To greet us when we stand;
We throng to meet you, but you hold
  To us no beckoning hand.

Faint as the years in which we breathed,
  Far as the death we died,
Dim as the faded battle-smoke,
  We wander at your side;
Cold as a cause outlived, or lost,
  Vague as the legends told
At twilight, of a mystic band
  Circling an Age of Gold.

[1] Written for the Centennial Celebration at Andover Phillips Academy.

Unseen, unheard, unfelt — and yet,
Beneath the army blue
Our heart-beats sounded real enough
When we were boys like you.
We turned us from your fabled lore,
With ancient passion rife ;
No myth, our solemn laying down
Of love, and hope, and life.

No myth, the clasped and severed hands,
No dream, the last replies.
Upon the desolated home
To-day, the sunlight lies.
Take, sons of peace, your heritage —
Our loss, your legacy ;
Our action be your fables fair,
Our facts, your poetry.

O ye who fall on calmer times !
The perils of the calm
Are yours — the swell, the sloth, the sleep,
The carelessness of harm,
The keel that rides the gale, to strike
Where the warm waves are still ;

Ours were the surf, the stir, the shock,
The tempest and the thrill.

Comrades, be yours that vigor old,
Be yours the elected power
That fits a man, like rock to tide,
To his appointed hour;
Yours to become all that we were,
And all we might have been;
Yours the fine eye that separates
The unseen from the seen.

THE UNSEEN COMRADES.[1]

LAST night I saw an armèd band, whose feet
Did take the martial step, although they trod
Soundless as waves of light upon the air.
(Silent from silent lips the bugle fell.)
The wind was wild ; but the great flag they bore,
Hung motionless, and glittered like a god
Above their awful faces while they marched.
And when I saw, I understood and said —
"If these are they whom we did love, and give,
What seek they?" But one sternly answered me, —
"We seek our comrades whom we left to thee :

[1] Written for the benefit of the Soldiers' Home at Chelsea, Massachusetts.

The weak, who were thy strength ; the poor, who had
Thy pride ; the faint and few who gave to thee
One supreme hour from out the day of life,
One deed majestic to their century.
These were thy trust : how fare they at thy hands ?
Thy saviors then — are they thy heroes now ?
Our comrades still ; we keep the step with them,
Behold ! As thou unto the least of them
Shalt do, so dost thou unto us. Amen."

STRONGER THAN DEATH

Who shall tell the story
As it was?
Write it with the heart's blood?
(Pale ink, alas!)
Speak it with the soul's lips,
Or be dumb?
Tell me, singers fled, and
Song to come!

No answer; like a shell the silence curls,
And far within it leans a whisper out,
Breathless and inarticulate, and whirls
And dies as dies an ailing dread or doubt.

And I — since there is found none else than I,
No stronger, sweeter voice than mine, to tell

This tale of love that cannot stoop to die —
Were fain to be the whisper in the shell;

Were fain to lose and spend myself within
The sacred silence of one mighty heart,
And leaning from it, hidden there, to win
Some finer ear that, listening, bends apart.

. . . . . .

"Fly for your lives!" The entrails of the earth
Trembled, resounding to the cry,
That, like a chasing ghost, around the mine
Crept ghastly: "The pit 's on fire! Fly!"

The shaft, a poisoned throat whose breath was death,
Like hell itself grown sick of sin,
Hurled up the men; haggard and terrible;
Leaping upon us through the din

That all our voices made; and back we shrank
From them as from the starting dead;

Recoiling, shrieked, but knew not why we
shrieked ;
And cried, but knew not what we said.

And still that awful mouth did toss them up :
" The last is safe ! The last is sound ! "
We sobbed to see them where they sunk and
crawled,
Like beaten hounds, upon the ground.

Some sat with lolling, idiot head, and
laughed ;
One reached to clutch the air away
His gasping lips refused ; some cursed ; and
one
Knelt down — but he was old — to pray.

We huddled there together all that night,
Women and men from the wild Town ;
I heard a shrill voice cry, " We all are up,
But some — ye have forgot — are down ! "

" Who is forgot ? " We stared from face to
face ;
But answering through the dark, she said

(It was a woman) : " Eh, ye need not fret ;
None is forgot except the dead.

" The buried dead asleep there in the works —
Eh, Lord ! It must be hot below !
Ye 'll keep 'em waking all the livelong night,
To set the mine a-burning so ! "

And all the night the mine did burn and burst,
As if the earth were but a shell
Through which a child had thrust a finger-touch,
And, peal on dreadful peal, the bell,

The miner's 'larum, wrenched the quaking air ;
And through the flaring light we saw
The solid forehead of the eternal hill
Take on a human look of awe ;

As if it were a living thing, that spoke
And flung some protest to the sky,

As if it were a dying thing that saw,
But could not tell, a mystery.

The bells ran ringing by us all that night.
The bells ceased jangling with the morn.
About the blackened works, — sunk, tossed, and rent,—
We gathered in the foreign dawn;

Women and men, with eyes askance and strange,
Fearing, we knew not what, to see.
Against the hollowed jaws of the torn hill,
Why creep the miners silently?

From man to man, a whisper chills: "See, see,
The sunken shaft of Thirty-one!
The earth, a traitor to her trust, has fled
And turned the dead unto the sun.

"And here — O God of life and death! Thy work,
Thine only, this!" With foreheads bare,

We knelt, and drew him, young and beautiful,
Thirty years dead, into the air.

Thus had he perished ; buried from the day ;
By the swift poison caught and slain;
By the kind poison unmarred, rendered fair
Back to the upper earth again —

The warm and breathing earth that knew him not ;
And men and women wept to see —
For kindred had he none among us all —
How lonely even the dead may be.

We wept, I say ; we wept who knew him not ;
But sharp, a tearless woman sprang
From out the crowd (that quavering voice I knew),
And terrible her cry outrang :

"I pass, I pass ye all ! Make way ! Stand back !
Mine is the place ye yield," she said.

"He was my lover once — my own, my own;
Oh, he was mine, and he is dead!"

Women and men, we gave her royal way;
Proud as young joy the smile she had.
We knew her for a neighbor in the Town,
Unmated, solitary, sad.

Youth, hope, and love, we gave her silent way,
Calm as a sigh she swept us all;
Then swiftly, as a word leans to a thought,
We saw her lean to him, and fall

Upon the happy body of the dead —
An aged woman, poor and gray.
Bright as the day, immortal as young Love,
And glorious as life, he lay.

Her shrunken hands caressed his rounded cheek,
Her white locks on his golden hair

Fell sadly. "O love!" she cried with shriveled lips,
"O love, my love, my own, my fair!

"See, I am old, and all my heart is gray.
They say the dead are aye forgot --
There, there, my sweet! I whisper, leaning low,
That all these women hear it not.

"Deep in the darkness there, didst think on me?
High in the heavens, have ye been true?
Since I was young, and since you called me fair,
I never loved a man but you.

And here, my boy, you lie, so safe, so still" —
But there she hushed; and in the dim,
Cool morning, timid as a bride, but calm
As a glad mother, gathered him

Unto her heart. And all the people then,
Women and men, and children too,

Crept back, and back, and back, and on,
  Still as the morning shadows do.

And left them in the lifting dawn—they two,
  On her sad breast, his shining head
Stirred softly, as were he the living one,
  And she had been the moveless dead.

And yet we crept on, back, and back, and on,
  The distance widened like the sky,
Between our little restlessness,
  And Love so godlike that it could not die.

II.

VITTORIA.

Wise was the word the wise man spake, who said,
"Angelo was the only man to whom God gave
Four souls," — the soul of sculpture and of song,
Of architecture and of art ; these all.
For so God lovèd him, as if he were
His only child, and grouped about those brows
Ideals of Himself — not angels mild
As those that flit and beckon other lives,
But cherubim and seraphim ; tall, strong,
Unsleeping, terrible ; with wings across
Their mighty feet ; and eyes — if we would look
Upon their blazing eyes, these too are hid —

Some angels are all wings! Oh, shine and fly!
Were ye not angels, ye would strike us blind.

And yet they did not, could not dazzle her —
That one sweet woman unto whom he bent
As pliant as the quarried marble turned
To life immortal in his own great hand.
Steadfast, Vittoria looked on Angelo.
She lifted lonely eyes. The years trod slow.
Fourfold the reverence which he gave to her,
Fourfold the awful tenderness, fourfold
The loyalty, the trust. And oh, fourfold
The comfort, beyond all power of comforting,
Whereby a lesser man may heal the hurt
Of widowhood!

Pescara had one soul —
A little one; and it was stained. And he —
It too, perhaps (God knows!) — was dead.
The dead are God's.

Vittoria had one heart.
The woman gave it, and the woman gives
Once. Angelo was too late. And one who dared
To shed a tear for him, has dropped it here.

NEW NEIGHBORS.

WITHIN the window's scant recess,
Behind a pink geranium flower,
She sits and sews, and sews and sits,
From patient hour to patient hour.

As woman-like as marble is,
Or as a lovely death might be—
A marble death condemned to make
A feint at life perpetually.

Wondering, I watch to pity her;
Wandering, I go my restless ways;
Content, I think the untamed thoughts
Of free and solitary days,

Until the mournful dusk begins
To drop upon the quiet street,
Until, upon the pavement far,
There falls the sound of coming feet:

A happy, hastening, ardent sound,
  Tender as kisses on the air —
Quick, as if touched by unseen lips
  Blushes the little statue there;

And woman-like as young life is,
  And woman-like as joy may be,
Tender with color, lithe with love,
  She starts, transfigured gloriously.

Superb in one transcendent glance —
  Her eyes, I see, are burning black —
My little neighbor, smiling, turns,
  And throws my unasked pity back.

I wonder, is it worth the while,
  To sit and sew from hour to hour —
To sit and sew with eyes of black,
  Behind a pink geranium flower?

BY THE HEARTH.

You come too late;
'Tis far on in November.
The wind strikes bleak
Upon the cheek
That careth rather to keep warm,
(And where 's the harm?)
Than to abate
One jot of its calm color for your sake.
Watch! See! I stir the ember
Upon my lonely hearth and bid the fire wake.

And think you that it will?
'T is burned, I say, to ashes.
It smoulders cold
As grave-yard mould.
I wish indeed you would not blow
Upon it so!
The dead to kill.
I say, the ghosts of fires will never stir,

Nor woman lift the lashes
Of eyes wept dim, howe'er yours shine for
love of her!

Ah, sweet surprise!
I did not think such shining
Upon the gloom
Of this cold room
Could fall. Your even, strong, calm breath
Calls life from death.
The warm light lies
At your triumphant feet, faint with desire
To reach you. See! The lining
Of violet and of silver in that sheath of fire!

If you would care —
Although it is November —
I will not say
A bitter nay
To such a gift for building fires.
And though it tires
Me to think of it — I 'll own to you
(If you can stir the ember)
It may be found at last, just warm enough
for two!

TOLD IN CONFIDENCE.

Vow you 'll never, never tell him!
Freezing stars now glittering farthest, fairest on the winter sky;
If he woo me,
Not your coldest, cruel ray
Or can or may
Be found more chill and still to him than I.

Swear you 'll never, never tell him!
Warm, red roses lifting your shy faces to the summer dew;
If he win me,
Blush your sweetest in his sight
For his delight,
But I can be as warm and sweet as you.

WHAT THE VIOLINS SAID.

SONG.

"We 're all for love," the violins said. — SIDNEY LANIER.

Do I love you? Do I love you?
Ask the heavens that bend above you
To find language and to prove you
If they love the living sun.
Ask the burning, blinded meadows
If they love the falling shadows,
If they hold the happy shadows
When the fervid day is done.

Ask the blue-bells and the daisies,
Lost amid the hot field-mazes,
Lifting up their thirsty faces,
If they love the summer rains.
Ask the linnets and the plovers,
In the nest-life made for lovers,
Ask the bees and ask the clovers —
Will they tell you for your pains?

Do I, Darling, do I love you ?
What, I pray, can that behoove you ?
How in Love's name can I move you ?
When for Love's sake I am dumb !
If I told you, if I told you,
Would that keep you, would that hold you,
Here at last where I enfold you ?
If it would — Hush ! Darling, come !

WON.

Oh, when I would have loved you, Dear,
The sun of winter hung more near ;
Yet not so sweet, so sweet, so sweet,
The wild-rose reddening at my feet.

Your lips had learned a golden word,
You sang a song that all men heard,
Oh, love is fleet, the strain is long.
Who stays the singer from her song ?

Across my path the red leaves whirled.
Dared I to kneel with all the world ?
How came I, then, to clasp you, Sweet,
And find a woman at my feet ?

SPENT.

Heart of iron, smile of ice,
Oh ! the rock.
See him stand as dumb as death.
If you could,
Would you care to stir or shock
Him, think you, by a blow or breath,
From his mood ?

Arms of velvet, lips of love,
Oh ! the wave.
See her creeping to his feet
Trustfully.
None shall know the sign he gave.
Death since then, were all too sweet.
Let her die.

Lift thine eyes upon the sea,
Soul of stone.

Rather (wouldst thou breathe or move?)
I would be
A warm wave, faithful, wasted, thrown,
Spent and rent and dead with love,
Than be thee.

PARTED.

Oh, never a word he answered,
And never a word spake she!
They turned their faces each from each,
And looked upon the sea.

The hands that cannot clasp for life,
Must quickly severed be.
The love that is not large enough
To live eternally,

In true love's name, for fair love's fame,
Must die before its bloom;
For it, in all God's earth or heaven,
There is no garden-room.

Though all the wine of life be lost,
Try well the red grape's hue.
Holy the soul that cannot taste
The false love for the true.

And blessed aye the fainting heart
  For such a thirst shall be —
Yet never a word they spoke, and looked
  Upon the bitter sea.

AN APRIL GUST.

It shall be as it hath been.
All the world is glad and green —
Hush! Ah, hush! There cannot be
April now for you and me.

Put your finger on the lips
Of your soul; the wild rain drips;
The wind goes diving down the sea;
Tell the wind, but tell not me.

Yet if I had aught to tell,
High as heaven, or deep as hell,
Bent the fates awry or fit,
I would find a word for it.

Oh, words that neither sea nor land
Can lift their ears to understand!
Wild words, as dumb as death or fear,
I dare to die, but not to hear!

THE ANSWER.

"That we together may sail,
Just as we used to do."
CARLETON'S BALLADS.

AND what if I should be kind?
And what if you should be true?
The old love could never go on,
Just as it used to do.

The wan, white hands of the waves
That smote us swift apart,
Will never enclasp again,
And draw us heart to heart.

The cold, far feet of the tides
That trod between us two,
Can never retrace their steps,
And fall where they used to do.

Oh, well the ships must remember,
That go down to the awful sea,
No keel that chisels the current
Can cut where it used to be.

Not a throb of the gloom or the glory
That stirs in the sun or the rain,
Will ever be *that* gloom or glory
That dazzled or darkened — again.

Not a wave that stretches its arms,
And yearns to the breast of the shore,
Is ever the wave that came trusting,
And yearning, and loving, before.

The hope that is high as the heavens,
The joy that is keen as pain,
The faith that is free as the morning,
Can die — but can live not again.

And though I should step beside you,
And hand should reach unto hand,
We should walk mutely — stifled —
Ghosts in a breathless land.

And what if I should be kind?
  And though you should be true?
The old love could never, never
  Love on as it used to do.

THORNS.

As we pass by the roses,
Into your finger-tip
Bruise you the thorn.
Quick at the prick you start,
Crying, "Alas, the smart!
Farewell, my pleasant friend,
Wisely our way we wend
Out of the reach of roses."

Oh, we pass by the roses!
Where does the red drop drip?
Where is the thorn?
What though 'tis hid and pressed
Piercing into my breast?
Scathless, I stretch my hand;
Strong as their roots I stand,
And dare to trust the roses.

THE INDIAN GIRL.

A PICTURE BY WALTER SHIRLAW.

She standeth silent as a thought
Too sacred to be uttered; all
Her face unfurling like a flower
That at a breath too near will shut.
Her life a little golden clock
Whose shining hands, arrested, stay
Forever at the hour of Love.

She doubts, she dares, she dreams — of what?
I ask; she, shrinking, answers not,
She swims before me, dim, a cup
Of waste, untasted tenderness.
I drink, I dread, until I seem
(Myself unto myself) to be
He whom she chose, and charmed — and missed,
On some faint Asiatic day
Of languorous summer, ages since.

SEALED.

"SHALL I pour you the wine," she said,
"The wine that is rare and red?
Sweeter the cup for the drop."—
"But why do you shrink and stop?"

"The seal of the wine
Has a sacred sign;
I am afraid," she said.

"I love and revere
You more for your fear,
Than I do for your wine," he said.

GUINEVERE.

Of Guinevere from Arthur separate,
And separate from Launcelot and the world,
And shielded in the convent with her sin,
As one draws fast a veil upon a face
That 's marred, but only holds the scar more close
Against the burning brain — I read to-day
This legend ; and if other yet than I
Have read, or said, how know I ? for the text
Was written in the story we have learned,
Between the ashen lines, invisible,
In hieroglyphs that blazed and leaped like light
Unto the eyes. A thousand times we read ;
A thousand turn the page and understand,
And think we know the record of a life,
When lo ! if we will open once again
The awful volume, hid, mysterious,

Intent, there lies the unseen alphabet —
Re-reads the tale from breath to death, and spells
A living language that we never knew.

This that I read was one short song of hers,
A fragment, I interpret, or a lost
Faint prelude to another — missing too.
She sang it (says the text) one summer night,
After the vespers, when the Abbess passed
And blessed her; when the nuns were gone, and when
She, kneeling in her drowsy cell, had said
Her prayers (poor soul!), her sorrowful prayers, in which
She had besought the Lord, for His dear sake,
And love and pity of His Only Son,
To wash her of her stain, and make her fit
On summer nights, behind the convent bars
And on stone floors, with bruisèd lips, to pray
Away all vision but repentance from
Her soul.

When, kneeling as she was, her limbs
Refused to bear her, and she fell afaint
From weariness and striving to become
A holy woman, all her splendid length
Upon the ground, and groveled there, aghast
That buried nature was not dead in her,
But lived, a rebel through her fair, fierce youth;
Aghast to find that claspèd hands would clench;
Aghast to feel that praying lips refused
Like saints to murmur on, but shrank
And quivered dumb. "Alas! I cannot pray!"
Cried Guinevere. "I cannot pray! I will
Not lie! God is an honest God, and I
Will be an honest sinner to his face.
Will it be wicked if I sing? Oh! let
Me sing a little, of I know not what;
Let me just sing, I know not why. For lips
Grow stiff with praying *all* the night.
Let me believe that I am happy, too.
A blessèd blessèd woman, who is fit
To sing because she did not sin; or else

That God forgot it for a little while
And does not mind me very much.
Dear Lord,"
(Said Guinevere), "wilt thou not listen while
I sing, as well as while I pray? I shall
Feel safer so. For I have naught to say
God should not hear. The song comes as
the prayer
Doth come. Thou listenest. I sing." . . .

Purple the night, and high were the skies,
and higher
The eyes that leaned like the stars of my
soul, to me.
Whom loveth the Queen? Him who hath
right to crown her.
Who but the King is he?

Sultry the day, and gold was the hair, and
golden
The mist that blinded my soul away from
me.
Dethroned for a dream, for a gleam, for a
glance, for a color,
How could the crownèd be?

Life goeth by like a deed, nor returneth forever.
Death cometh on, fleet-footed as pity should be.
Hush! When she waketh at last and looketh about her,
Whom will a woman see?

Thus in her cell,
Deep in the summer night, sang Guinevere —
A little, broken, blind, sweet melody —
And then she kneeled upon the convent floor,
And, peaceful, finished all her prayer and slept;
For she had naught to say God might not hear.

SUNG TO A FRIEND.

THE tide is rising, rising
  Out of the infinite sea;
From ripple, to wave, to billow,
Past beryl and gold and crimson,
A prism of perfect splendor;
  What shall the white surf be?

The sacred tide is rising,
  Rising for you and me.
Defiant across the breaker,
Wave unto wave must answer,
The sea to the shore will follow;
  When shall the great flood be?

The tide must turn falling, falling
  Back to the awful sea.
Thus far shalt thou go, no farther.
The color sinks to the shadow,

The pæan sobs into silence,
  Where shall the ebb-line be?

By the weeds left blazing, beating
  Like heart-throbs of the sea,
By the law of the land and the ocean,
By the Hand that holdeth the torrent,
I summon the tide eternal
  To flow for you and me!

INCOMPLETION.

Perhaps the bud lost from the loaded tree
The sweetest blossom of the May would be;

Or wildest song that summer could have heard
Is dumb within the throat of the dead bird.

The perfect statue that all men have sought
May in some crippled hand be hid, unwrought.

Which of our dearest dead betook his flight
Into the rose-red star that fell last night?

The words forever by thy lips unsaid
Had been the crown of life upon thy head.

The splendid sun of all my days might be
The love that I shall never give to thee.

RAFE'S CHASM.

CAPE ANN, SEPTEMBER SURF. 1882.

WHITE fire upon the gray-green waste of waves,
The low light of the breaker flares. Ah, see!
Outbursting on a sky of steel and ice,
The baffled sun stabs wildly at the gale.
The water rises like a god aglow,
Who all too long hath slept, and dreamed too sure,
And finds his goddess fled his empty arms.
Silent, the mighty cliff receives at last
That rage of elemental tenderness,
The old, omnipotent caress she knows.
Yet once the solid earth did melt for her
And, pitying, made retreat before her flight;
Would she have hidden her forever there?
Or did she, wavering, linger long enough
To let the accustomed torrent chase her down?

Over the neck of the gorge,
I cling. Lean desperately!
He who feared a chasm's edge
Were never the one to see
The torment and the triumph hid
Where the deep surges be.
I pierce the gulf; I sweep the coast
Where wide the tide swings free;
I search as never soul sought before.
There is not patience enough in all the shore,
There is not passion enough in all the sea,
To tell my love for thee.

GALATEA.

A MOMENT's grace, Pygmalion ! Let me be
A breath's space longer on this hither hand
Of fate too sweet, too sad, too mad to meet.
Whether to be thy statue or thy bride —
An instant spare me ! Terrible the choice,
As no man knoweth, being only man ;
Nor any, saving her who hath been stone
And loved her sculptor. Shall I dare exchange
Veins of the quarry for the throbbing pulse ?
Insensate calm for a sure-aching heart ?
Repose eternal for a woman's lot ?
Forego God's quiet for the love of man ?
To float on his uncertain tenderness,
A wave tossed up the shore of his desire,
To ebb and flow whene'er it pleaseth him ;
Remembered at his leisure, and forgot,
Worshiped and worried, clasped and dropped at mood,

Or soothed or gashed at mercy of his will,
Now Paradise my portion, and now Hell;
And every single, several nerve that beats
In soul or body, like some rare vase, thrust
In fire at first, and then in frost, until
The fine, protesting fibre snaps?

Oh, who
Foreknowing, ever chose a fate like this?
What woman out of all the breathing world
Would be a woman, could her heart select,
Or love her lover, could her life prevent?
Then let me be that only, only one;
Thus let me make that sacrifice supreme,
No other ever made, or can, or shall.
Behold, the future shall stand still to ask,
What man was worth a price so isolate?
And rate thee at its value for all time.

For I am driven by an awful Law.
See! while I hesitate, it mouldeth me,
And carves me like a chisel at my heart.
'T is stronger than the woman or the man;
'T is greater than all torment or delight;

'T is mightier than the marble or the flesh.
Obedient be the sculptor and the stone!
Thine am I, thine at all the cost of all
The pangs that woman ever bore for man;
Thine I elect to be, denying them;
Thine I elect to be, defying them;
Thine, thine I dare to be, in scorn of them;
And being thine forever, bless I them!

Pygmalion! Take me from my pedestal,
And set me lower — lower, Love! — that I
May be a woman, and look up to thee;
And looking, longing, loving, give and take
The human kisses worth the worst that thou
By thine own nature shalt inflict on me.

PART OF THE PRICE.

TAKE back, my friend, the gifts once given.
No fairer find I this side Heaven
With which to bless thee, than thine own
Resource of blessing. Mine alone
To render what is mine to lose.
No niggard am I with it. Choose!
Lavish, I keep not any part
Of that great price within my heart.
Wilt thou the quiet comfort have?
Thine be it, daily, to the grave!
The courage, shining down from one
Whose answering eyes put out the sun?
The tenderness that touched the nerve
Like music? Oh, I bid these serve
Thee, soothe thee, watchful of thy need
While mine is unattended; feed
Thy heart while mine goes famished. Glad,
I give the dearest thing I had.
Impoverished, can I find or spare

Aught else to thee of rich or rare?
Sweet thoughts that through the soul do sing,
And deeds like loving hands that cling,
And loyal faith — a sentry — nigh,
And prayers all rose-clouds hovering high?
Nay, nay; I keep not any. Hold
The wealth I leave with fingers cold
And trembling in thine own. One thing
Alone I do deny to bring
And give again to thee. Not now,
Nor ever, Dear, shalt thou learn how
To wrest it from me. Test thy strength!
By the world's measures, height or length —
Too weak art thou, too weak to gain,
By sleight of tenderness or snatch of pain
— At thine own most or least — to take from me
Mine own ideal lost — and saved — of thee.

EURYDICE.

Listening.

A PICTURE BY BURNE JONES.

I.

As sentient as a wedding-bell,
The vibrant air throbs calling her
Whose eager body, earwise curved,
Leans listening at the heart of hell.
She is one nerve of hearing, strained
To love and suffer, hope and fear —
Thus, hearkening for her Love, she waits,
Whom no man's daring heart has gained.

II.

Oh, to be sound to such an ear!
Song, carol, vesper, comfort near,
Sweet words, at sweetest, whispered low,
Or dearer silence, happiest so.

By little languages of love
Her finer audience to prove;
A tenderness untried, to fit
To soul and sense so exquisite;
The blessed Orpheus to be
At last, to such Eurydice!

. . . . . .

III.

I listened in hell! I listened in hell!
Down in the dark I heard your soul
Singing mine out to the holy sun.
Deep in the dark I heard your feet
Ringing the way of Love in hell.
Into the flame you strode and stood.
Out of the flame you bore me well,
As I listened in hell.

IV.

I listen in hell! I listen in hell!
Who trod the fire? Where was the scorch?
Clutched, clasped, and saved, what a tale was to tell
—— Heaven come down to hell!

Oh, like a spirit you strove for my sake!
Oh, like a man you looked back for your own!
Back, though you loved me heavenly well,
Back, though you lost me. The gods did decree,
And I listen in hell.

ELAINE AND ELAINE.

I.

DEAD, she drifted to his feet.
Tell us, Love, is Death so sweet?

Oh! the river floweth deep.
Fathoms deeper is her sleep.

Oh! the current driveth strong.
Wilder tides drive souls along.

Drifting, though he loved her not,
To the heart of Launcelot,

Let her pass; it is her place.
Death hath given her this grace.

Let her pass; she resteth well.
What her dreams are, who can tell?

Mute the steersman ; why, if he
Speaketh not a word, should we ?

II.

Dead, she drifteth to his feet.
Close, her eyes keep secrets sweet.

Living, he had loved her well.
High as Heaven and deep as Hell.

Yet that voyage she stayeth not.
Wait you for her, Launcelot ?

Oh ! the river floweth fast.
Who is justified at last ?

Locked her lips are. Hush ! If she
Sayeth nothing, how should we ?

III.

THE POET AND THE POEM.

Upon the city called the Friends'
The light of waking spring
Fell vivid as the shadow thrown
Far from the gleaming wing
Of a great golden bird, that fled
Before us loitering.

In hours before the spring, how light
The pulse of heaviest feet!
And quick the slowest hopes to stir
To measures fine and fleet.
And warm will grow the bitterest heart
To shelter fancies sweet.

Securely looks the city down
On her own fret and toil;
She hides a heart of perfect peace
Behind her veins' turmoil —

A breathing-space removed apart
From out their stir and soil.

Our reverent feet that golden day
Stood in a quiet place,
That held repressed — I know not what
Of such a poignant grace
As falls, if dumb with life untold,
Upon a human face.

To fashion silence into words
The softest, teach me how!
I know the place is Silence caught
A-dreaming, then and now.
I only know 't was blue above,
And it was green below.

And where the deepening sunshine found
And held a holy mood,
Lowly and old, of outline quaint,
In mingled brick and wood,
Clasped in the arms of ivy vines
A nestling cottage stood:

A thing so hidden and so fair,
So pure that it would seem
Hewn out of nothing earthlier
Than a young poet's dream,
Of nothing sadder than the lights
That through the ivies gleam.

"Tell me," I said, while shrill the birds
Sang through the garden space,
To her who guided me — "tell me
The story of the place."
She lifted, in her Quaker cap,
A peaceful, puzzled face,

Surveyed me with an aged, calm,
And unpoetic eye;
And peacefully, but puzzled half,
Half tolerant, made reply:
"The people come to see that house—
Indeed, I know not why,

"Except thee know the poem there—
'T was written long since, yet

His name who wrote it, now — in fact —
I cannot seem to get —
His name who wrote that poetry
I always do forget.

"*Hers* was Evangeline ; and here
In sound of Christ Church bells
She found her lover in this house,
Or so I 've heard folks tell.
But most I know is, that 's her name,
And his was Gabriel.

"I 've heard she found him dying, in
The room behind that door,
(One of the Friends' old almshouses,
Perhaps thee 've heard before ;)
Perhaps thee 've heard about her all
That I can tell, and more.

"Thee can believe she found him here,
If thee do so incline.
Folks have their fashions in belief —
That may be one of thine.

I 'm sure his name was Gabriel,
And hers Evangeline."

She turned her to her common work
And unpoetic ways,
Nor knew the rare, sweet note she struck
Resounding to your praise,
O Poet of our common nights,
And of our care-worn days!

Translator of our golden mood,
And of our leaden hour!
Immortal thus shall poet gauge
The horizon of his power.
Wear in your crown of laurel leaves,
The little ivy flower!

And happy be the singer called
To such a lofty lot!
And ever blessed be the heart
Hid in the simple spot
Where Evangeline was loved and wept,
And Longfellow forgot.

O striving soul! strive quietly,
Whate'er thou art or dost,
Sweetest the strain, when in the song
The singer has been lost;
Truest the work, when 't is the deed,
Not doer, counts for most!

The shadow of the golden wing
Grew deep where'er it fell.
The heart it brooded over will
Remember long and well
Full many a subtle thing, too sweet
Or else too sad to tell.

Forever fall the light of spring
Fair as that day it fell,
Where Evangeline, led by your voice,
O solemn Christ Church bell!
For lovers of all springs, all climes,
At last found Gabriel.

OVERTASKED.

It was a weary hour,
I looked in the lily-bell.
How holy is the flower!
It leaned like an angel against the light;
"O soul!" it said, sighing, "be white, be white!"

I stretched my arms for rest,
I turned to the evening cloud —
A vision how fair, how blest!
"Low heart," it called, softly, "arise and fly.
It were yours to reach levels as high as I."

I stooped to the hoary wave
That wept on the darkening shore.
It sobbed to me: "Oh, be brave!
Whatever you do, or dare, or will,
Like me to go striving, unresting still."

STRANDED.

O BUSY ships! that smile in sailing
In a glory
Like a dream,
From the colors of the harbor to the colors of the sea.
In singing words or in bewailing,
Tell the story
As you gleam,
Tell the story, guess the language of my idle hours for me.

O busy waves! so blest in bruising
Your white faces
On the shore.
So happy to be wasted with the purpose of the sea,
Content to leave with it the choosing

Of your places
Evermore,
Whisper but the far sea-meaning of my stranded life for me.

Gray the sails grow in departing
Like fleet swallows
To the South.
Stern the tide turns in its parting,
As it follows
With dumb mouth.
In the stillness and the sternness God makes answer unto me.

GLOUCESTER HARBOR.

One shadow glides from the dumb shore,
And one from every silent sail.
One cloud the averted heavens wear,
A soft mask, thin and frail.

Oh, silver is the lessening rain,
And yellow was the weary drouth.
The reef her warning finger puts
Upon the harbor's mouth.

Her thin, wan finger, stiff and stark,
She holds by night, she holds by day.
Ask, if you will. No answer makes
The sombre, guarded bay.

The fleet, with idle canvas hung,
Like a brute life, sleeps patiently.
The headlights nod across the cliff,
The fog blows out to sea.

There is no color on the tide,
No color on the helpless sky;
Across the beach, — a safe, small sound —
The grass-hid crickets cry.

And through the dusk I hear the keels
Of home-bound boats grate low and sweet.
O happy lights! O watching eyes!
Leap out the sound to greet.

O tender arms that meet and clasp!
Gather and cherish while ye may.
The morrow knoweth God. Ye know
Your own are yours to-day.

Forever from the Gloucester winds
The cries of hungry children start.
There breaks in every Gloucester wave
A widowed woman's heart.

THE TERRIBLE TEST.

SEPARATE, upon the folded page
Of myth or marvel, sad or glad,
The test that gave the Lord to thee,
And thee to us, O Galahad!

"Found pure in deed, and word, and thought,"
The creature of our dream and guess,
The vision of the brain thou art,
The eidolon of holiness.

Man with the power of the God,
Man with the weaknesses of men,
Whose lips the Sangreal leaned to feed,
"Whose strength was the strength of ten."

We read — and smile; no man thou wast;
No human pulses thine could be;

With downcast eyes we read — and sigh ;
So terrible is purity !

O fairest legend of the years,
With folded wings, go, silently !
O flower of knighthood, yield your place
To One who comes from Galilee !

To wounded feet that shrink and bleed,
But press and climb the narrow way, —
The same old way our own must step,
Forever, yesterday, to-day.

For soul can be what soul hath been,
And feet can tread where feet have trod.
Enough, to know that once the clay
Hath worn the features of the God.

MY DREAMS ARE OF THE SEA.

My dreams are of the Sea.
All night the living waters stepped
Stately and steadily. All night the wind
Conducted them. With forehead high, a rock,
Glittering with joy, stood to receive the shock
Of the flood-tide. I saw it in the mind
Of sleep and silence. When I woke, I wept.

My dreams are of the Sea.
But oh, it is the Sea of Glass!
I met that other tide as I desired.
Alone, the rock and I leaned to the wave, —
A foolish suicide, that scooped its grave
Within the piteous sand. Now I am tired.
It died and it was buried. Let me pass.

SONG.

THE firelight listens on the floor
To hear the wild winds blow.
Within, the bursting roses burn,
Without, there slides the snow.

Across the flower I see the flake
Pass mirrored, mystic, slow.
Oh, blooms and storms must blush and freeze,
While seasons come and go!

I lift the sash — and live, the gale
Comes leaping to my call.
The rose is but a painted one
That hangs upon the wall.

AN INTERPRETATION.

CHOPIN.

Prelude in C Minor, Opus 28.

FROM whirlwind to shower,
From noon-glare to shadow,
From the plough to the vesper,
A day is gone.
From passion to purpose,
From turmoil to rest,
From discord to harmony,
Life moveth on.

From terror and heartbreak,
From anger of anguish,
From vigil and famine,
A soul has gone.
By mercy of mystery,
Through trust which is best,
To feasting and sleeping now,
God calleth on.

THE SPHINX.[1]

O GLAD girls' faces, hushed and fair! how
shall I sing for ye?
For the grave picture of a sphinx is all that
I can see.

Vain is the driving of the sand, and vain the
desert's art;
The years strive with her, but she holds the
lion in her heart.

Baffled or fostered, patient still, the perfect
purpose clings;
Flying or folded, strong as stone, she wears
the eagle's wings.

Eastward she looks; against the sky the
eternal morning lies;
Silent or pleading, veiled or free, she lifts
the woman's eyes.

[1] Written for a graduating class at Abbott Academy.

O grave girls' faces, listening kind! glad will
I sing for ye,
While the proud figure of the sphinx is all
that I can see.

VICTURÆ SALUTAMUS.[1]

SHALL we who are about to live,
Cry like a clarion on the battle-field?
Or weep before 't is fought, the fight to yield?
Thou that hast been and yet that art to be
Named by our name, that art the First and Last!
Womanhood of the future and the past!
Thee we salute, below the breath. Oh, give
To us the courage of our mystery.
. . . Pealing, the clock of Time
Has struck the Woman's Hour. . . .
We hear it on our knees. For ah, no power
Is ours to trip too lightly to the rhyme
Of idle words that fan the summer air,
Of bounding words that leap the years to come.
Ideal of ourselves! We dream and dare.
Victuræ salutamus! *Thou* art dumb.

[1] Written for the first Commencement at Smith College.

THE ERMINE.

I READ of the ermine to-day,
Of the ermine who will not step
By the feint of a step in the mire, —
The creature who will not stain
Her garment of wild, white fire;

Of the dumb, flying, soulless thing
(So we with our souls dare to say),
The being of sense and of sod,
That will not, that will not defile
The nature she took from her God.

And we, with the souls that we have,
Go cheering the hunters on
To a prey with that pleading eye.
She cannot go into the mud!
She can stay like the snow, and die!

The hunters come leaping on.
She turns like a heart at bay.

They do with her as they will.
. . . O thou who thinkest on this!
Stand like a star, and be still,

Where the soil oozes under thy feet.
Better, ah, better to die
Than to take one step in the mire!
Oh, blessed to die or to live,
With garments of holy fire!

UNQUENCHED.[1]

I THINK upon the conquering Greek who ran
(Brave was the racer!) that brave race of
old —
Swifter than hope his feet that did not tire.

Calmer than love the hand which reached
that goal;
A torch it bore, and cherished to the end,
And rescued from the winds the sacred fire.

O life the race! O heart the racer! Hush!
And listen long enough to learn of him
Who sleeps beneath the dust with his desire.

Go! shame thy coward weariness, and wail.
Who doubles contest, doubles victory.
Go! learn to run the race, and carry fire.

[1] At the Promethean and other festivals, young men ran with torches or lamps lighted from the sacrificial altar. "In this contest, only he was victorious whose lamp remained unextinguished in the race."

O Friend! The lip is brave, the heart is weak.
Stay near. The runner faints — the torch falls pale.
Save me the flame that mounteth ever higher!

Grows it so dark? I lift mine eyes to *thine;*
Blazing within them, steadfast, pure, and strong,
Against the wind there fights the eternal fire.

THE KING'S IMAGE.

Of iron were his arms; they could have held
The need of half the kingdom up; and in
His brow were iron atoms too. Thus was
He built. His heart, observe, was wrought of gold,
Burnished; it dazzled one to look at it.
His feet were carved of clay — and so he fell.

Clay unto clay shall perish and return.
The tooth of rust shall gnaw the iron down.
The conqueror of time, gold must endure.

Thou great amalgam! Suffering in thyself,
The while inflicting still the certain fate
Of thy disharmony. From Nature's law,

Unto her law, thy doom appeals ; bids thee
To fear the metal sinews of thy soul,
And scorn the dust on which thou totterest ;
But save, oh, save the heart of gold for one
Who did, beholding, trust in it.

IV.

AT THE PARTY.

HALF a dozen children
  At our house!
Half a dozen children
  Quiet as a mouse,
Quiet as a moonbeam,
  You could hear a pin —
Waiting for the party
    To begin.

Such a flood of flounces!
  (Oh dear me!)
Such a surge of sashes
  Like a silken sea.
Little eyes demurely
  Cast upon the ground,
Little airs and graces
    All around.

High time for that party
To begin!
To sit so any longer
Were a sort of sin;
As if you were n't acquainted
With society.
What a thing to tell of
That would be!

Up spoke a little lady
Aged five;
"I 've tumbled up my over-dress,
Sure as I 'm alive!
My dress came from Paris;
We sent to Worth for it;
Mother says she calls it
Such a fit!"

Quick there piped another
Little voice —
"*I* did n't send for dresses,
Though I had my choice;
I have got a doll that
Came from Paris too;

It can walk and talk as
Well as you ! "

Still, till now, there sat one
Little girl ;
Simple as a snow-drop,
Without flounce or curl.
Modest as a primrose,
Soft, plain hair brushed back,
But the color of her dress was
Black — all black.

Swift she glanced around with
Sweet surprise ;
Bright and grave the look that
Widened in her eyes.
To entertain the party
She must do her share,
As if God had sent her
Stood she there ;

Stood a minute, thinking,
With crossed hands
How she best might meet the
Company's demands.

Grave and sweet the purpose
To the child's voice given: —
"*I* have a little brother
Gone to Heaven!"

On the little party
Dropped a spell;
All the little flounces
Rustled where they fell;
But the modest maiden
In her mourning gown,
Unconscious as a flower,
Looketh down.

Quick my heart besought her,
Silently.
"Happy little maiden,
Give, O give to me
The highness of your courage,
The sweetness of your grace,
To speak a large word, in a
Little place."

A JEWISH LEGEND.

I LIKE that old, kind legend
  Not found in Holy Writ,
And wish that John or Matthew
  Had made Bible out of it.

But though it is not Gospel,
  There is no law to hold
The heart from growing better
  That hears the story told: —

How the little Jewish children
  Upon a summer day,
Went down across the meadows
  With the Child Christ to play.

And in the gold-green valley,
  Where low the reed-grass lay,
They made them mock mud-sparrows
  Out of the meadow clay.

So, when these all were fashioned,
And ranged in rows about,
"Now," said the little Jesus,
"We 'll let the birds fly out."

Then all the happy children
Did call, and coax, and cry —
Each to his own mud-sparrow:
"Fly, as I bid you! Fly!"

But earthen were the sparrows,
And earth they did remain,
Though loud the Jewish children
Cried out, and cried again.

Except the one bird only
The little Lord Christ made;
The earth that owned Him Master,
— His earth heard and obeyed.

Softly He leaned and whispered:
"Fly up to Heaven! Fly!"
And swift, His little sparrow
Went soaring to the sky,

And silent, all the children
  Stood, awestruck, looking on,
Till, deep into the heavens,
  The bird of earth had gone.

I like to think, for playmate
  We have the Lord Christ still,
And that still above our weakness
  He works His mighty will,

That all our little playthings
  Of earthen hopes and joys
Shall be, by His commandment,
  Changed into heavenly toys.

Our souls are like the sparrows
  Imprisoned in the clay,
Bless Him who came to give them wings
  Upon a Christmas Day!

V.

THE SONGS OF SEVENTY YEARS.

J. G. W.

MASTER! let stronger lips than these
  Turn melody to harmony,
Poet! mine tremble as they crave
  A word alone with thee.

Thy songs melt on the vibrant air,
  The wild birds know them, and the wind;
The common light hath claim on them,
  The common heart and mind.

And air, and light, and wind, shall be
  Thy fellow-singers, while they say
How seventy years of music stir
  The common pulse to-day.

Hush, sweetest songs! Mine ears are deaf
  To all of ye save only one.

Blind are the eyes that turn the leaf
  Against the Autumn sun.

Oh, blinder once were fading eyes,
  Close folded now from shine and rain,
And duller were the dying ears
  That heard the chosen strain.

Stay, solemn chant! 'T is mine to sing
  Your notes alone below the breath.
'T is mine to bless the poet who
  Can bless the hour of death.

For once a spirit "sighed for home,"
  A "longed for light whereby to see,"
And "wearied," found the way to them,
  O Christian seer, through thee!

Passed — with thy words on paling lips,
  Passed — with thy courage to depart;
Passed — with thy trust within the soul,
  Thy music in the heart.

Oh, calm above our restlessness,
  And rich beyond our dreaming, yet

In heaven, I know, one owes to thee
A glad and grateful debt.

From it may learn some tenderer art,
May find and take some better way
Than all our tenderest and best,
To crown thy life to-day.

BIRTHDAY VERSES.

H. B. S.

Arise, and call her blessed, — seventy years!
Each one a tongue to speak for her, who needs
No poor device of ours to tell to-day
The story of her glory in our hearts.
Precede us all, ye quiet lips of love,
Ye honors high of home — nobilities
Of mother and of wife — the heraldry
Of happiness ; dearer to her than were
The homage of the world. We yield unto
The royal claims of tenderness. Speak thou
Before all voices, ripened human life!

Arise, and call her blessed, dark-browed men!
She put the silver lyre aside for you.
She could not stroll across the idle strings
Of fancy, while you wept uncomforted,

But rang upon the fetters of a race
Enchained, the awful chord which pealed
along,
And echoed in the cannon-shot that broke
The manacle, and bade the bound go free.
She brought a Nation on its knees for shame,
She brought a world into a black slave's
heart.
Where are our lighter laurels? O my friends!
Brothers and sisters of the busy pen,
Five million freemen crown her birthday
feast,
Before whose feet our little leaf we lay.

Arise and call her blessed, fainting souls!
For whom she sang the strains of holy hope.
Within the gentle twilight of her days,
Like angels, bid her own hymns visit her.
Her life no ivy-tangled door, but wide
And welcome to His solemn feet, who need
Not knock for entrance, nor one ever ask
"Who cometh there?" so still and sure the
step,
So well we know God doth "abide in her."

Oh, wait to make her blessed, happy world! —
To which she looketh onward, ardently.
Lie in fair distance far, ye streets of gold,
Where up and down light-hearted spirits walk,
And wonder that they stayed so long away.
Be patient for her coming, for our sakes,
Who will love Heaven better, keeping her.
This only ask we: — When from prayer to praise
She moves, and when from peace to joy; be hers
To know she hath the life eternal, since
Her own heart's dearest wish did meet her there.

A TRIBUTE.

Blinded I groped — you gave me sight.
Perplexed I turned — you sent me light.
You speak unto a thousand ears:
I pay you tribute in hid tears.
I pay you homage in the hopes
That rise to scale life's scathèd slopes.
I give you gratitude in this:
That, midway on the precipice
You never trod and never saw,
Where air you never drank, strikes raw
And wan upon the wasted breath,
And gulfs you never passed, gape death,
And crags you gained some sunlit way
Frown threatening over me to-day,—
That here with bruisèd hand I cling,
Because I heard you yonder sing
With those who conquer. If through joy,
Then deeper be our shame who toy

And loiter in the scourging rain,
And did not pass by strength of pain.
Laggard below, I reach to bless
You who are King of happiness;
You are the victor, you the brave,
Who could not stoop to be *her* slave.
Downward to me, rebuking, fling
My privilege of suffering.
I take and listen. Teach me. See!
Nearer than you, I ought to be;
Nearer the height man never trod,
Nearer the veilèd face of God.
I ought, and am not. Comrade! be
Unconscious captain unto me.
Unknowing, beckon and command:
I answer you with unseen hand.
You read in vain these lines between,
And smiling, wonder whom I mean.

TO O. W. H.

AUGUST 29, 1879.

I HAD no song so wise and sweet,
  As birthday songs, dear friend, should be.
Silent, among a hundred guests,
  I only prayed for thee.

Such wishes held the speaking lip,
  Such mood of blessing took me, there,
That music, like a bird to heaven,
  Flew, and was lost in prayer.

WHOSE SHALL THE WELCOME BE?

H. W. L.

THE wave goes down, the wind goes down,
The gray tide glitters on the sea,
The moon seems praying in the sky.
Gates of the New Jerusalem
(A perfect pearl each gate of them)
Wide as all heaven swing on high;
Whose shall the welcome be?

The wave went down, the wind went down,
The tide of life turned out to sea;
Patience of pain and grace of deed,
The glories of the heart and brain,
Treasure that shall not come again;
The human singing that we need,
Set to a heavenly key.

The wave goes down, the wind goes down,
All tides at last turn to the sea.

We learn to take the thing we have.
  Thou who hast taught us strength in grief,
  As moon to shadow, high and chief,
Shine out, white soul, beyond the grave,
  And light our loss of thee!

EXEAT.

To the hope that he has taught,
To the beauty he has wrought,
To the comfort he has been;
To the dream that poets tell,
To the land where Gabriel
Can not lose Evangeline;—
Hush! let him go.

GEORGE ELIOT.[1]

At evening once, the lowly men who loved
Our Master were found desolate, and grieved
For Him whose eyes had been the glory of
Their lives. He, silent, followed them, and joined
Himself unto their sorrow; with the voice
Of love that liveth past the end, and yearns
Like empty arms across the sepulchre,
Did comfort them. They heard, and knew Him not.

At eventide, O Lord, one trod for us
The solitary way of a great Soul;
Whereof the peril, pain, and debt, alone
He knows, who marked the road.

[1] The last book which she read was Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*.

We watched, and held
Her in our arms of prayer. We wept, and said:
Our sister hath a heavy hurt. We bow,
And cry: The crown is buried with the Queen.

At twilight, as she, groping, sought for rest,
What solemn footfall echoed down the dark?
What tenderness that would not let her go?
And patience that Love only knoweth, paced
Silent, beside her, to the last, faint step?
What scarred Hand gently caught her as she sank?
Thou being with her, though she knew Thee not.

HER JURY.

A LILY rooted in a sacred soil,
Arrayed with those who neither spin nor toil ;
Dinah, the preacher, through the purple air,
Forever in her gentle evening prayer
Shall plead for Her — what ear too deaf to hear ? —
"As if she spoke to some one very near."

And he of storied Florence, whose great heart
Broke for its human error ; wrapped apart,
And scorching in the swift, prophetic flame
Of passion for late holiness ; and shame
Than untried glory grander, gladder, higher —
Deathless, for Her, he "testifies by fire."

A statue fair and firm on shining feet,
Womanhood's woman, Dorothea, sweet

As strength, and strong as tenderness, to make
A "struggle with the dark" for white light's sake,
Immortal stands, unanswered speaks. Shall they,
Of Her great hand the moulded, breathing clay,
Her fit, select, and proud survivors be?
Possess the life eternal, and not *She?*

VI.

A PRAYER.

MATINS.

LORD, Thou hast promised. Lo! I give
Thee back
Thine own great Word. Keep it. I summon Thee.
Keep it as God can, not as men do. See,
Great God! who art to us the awful Truth
Whereby we live, and move, and know the true —
I ask Thee to be true unto Thyself.

There is a soul that has not sinned unto
The death. I pray for it. To such as seek
For such a one, O Power invisible!
O Mystery and Mercy! Thou hast said
Thou hearkenest. I dare remind Thee, God.

I dare appeal unto Thine honor. Hear!
Fulfill Thy pledge to me.
God, God! Great God!
I pour my soul out, dash it down awaste
Like water, as I would my life, to save
This other one. I light my words with fire,
Like fagots scorching all my shrinking heart.
So would I walk in fire with these my feet
Of flesh, if that could melt this frozen heart
I pray for.
Thou who listenest! Dumb God!
Had I Thy dreadful power to turn the souls
Of men as they were rivers in Thy hand,
Then would I *have* this noble one. I would
Not lose its loyalty. I tell Thee, Lord,
If I had made it, then it sure should love
And honor me.
Hearken to me! Oh, save!
Give me mine answer! Save!
Great God,
I summon Thee! I summon Thee!

. . . . .

Father,

I am Thy child. If I have asked too much,
Or asked or longed amiss in any wise,
Or read awry Thy Word mysterious,
Or made one cry unworthy of a child,
I pray Thee to deny me all I ask
Unto my asking, and rebuke me so.
And if Thou savest, Lord, dear Lord, *dear Lord!*
Then let it be because some worthier
Than I, did pray. . . . .

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

For the faith that is not broken
By the burden of the day;
For the word that is not spoken
(Dearest words are slow to say);
For the golden draught unproffered
To the thirst that thirsteth on;
For the hand that is not offered
When the struggling strength is gone;
For the sturdy heart that will not
Make a pauper of my need;
Friend, I mean sometime to thank thee,
From my soul, in truth and deed.
Wait! Some day, when I am braver,
I will do so — say so. Now
(Oh! be tender!) I am tired;
I have forgotten how.

HYMN.

FOR A BROTHER'S INSTALLATION.

LORD, are there any stones upon the way,
That tear Thy bleeding feet?
If our weak hands can move them from Thy path,
Give us that duty sweet.

Is there, O patient and pathetic Face!
One thorn upon Thy brow
That we can pluck from out Thy cruel crown?
For we would do it now.

Is there a deed so difficult for us
That none but Thou canst ask?
Thine asking be our answering. Lo! swift
Be ours that happy task.

Lord, hast Thou left Thy hungry in the world
For us to find, to feed?
Sharper the hungers of the soul. Give us
Nutrition for that need.

And hast Thou prisoners unvisited,
Whose woes our care should tell?
There is a deeper prison of the heart;
Help us to find that cell.

Is there a mourner dear to Thee, whom we
Have left uncomforted?
Yet still through lonelier loneliness, the heart
Bereft of Thee, is led.

O world of common, human cries! and calls
Of souls in direst need!
To meet ye, mighty were the love that sought
To take the Master's speed.

Give us that love, dear God, who gave to us
To bear His loving name.

Give us that sacred speed to keep the step
That strikes with His the same.

Waves of one tide, this people be! and flow
Straight shoreward to Thy will.
White as a dove, upon them, now descend
Thy Spirit, strong and still.

Thy blessings on their future rest and brood,
— The brightest, lip can tell, —
In home and heart, in faith and fact, O best
Of daily mercy! dwell.

With those who summon — trusting it to lead
Their feet to walk Christ's way —
The voice of him on whose bowed head, I call
The grace of God to-day.

ANSWERED.

WHY did I never sing a song to you?
Dearest! To you again, behold the question start.
To mine own pulses have I ever sung? Or do
I read a rhyme unto my beating heart?

WESTWARD.

My thoughts like waves creep up, creep on,
How patient is the sea!
How shall we climb — the tide and I —
Up to the hills and thee?

Were waters free as winds, to go
Where mood or need might be,
They could but find the sky, above
The cañon as the sea.

THREE FRIENDS.

Oh, not to you, my mentor sweet,
And stern as only sweetness can,
Whose grave eyes look out steadfastly
Across my nature's plan,

And take unerring measure down
Where'er that plan is failed or foiled,
Thinking far less of purpose kept
Than of a vision spoiled.

And tender less to what I am,
Than sad for what I might have been;
And walking softly before God
For my soul's sake, I ween.

'T is not to you, my spirit leans,
O grave, true judge! When spent with strife,

And groping out of gloom for light,
And out of death for life.

Nor yet to you, who calmly weigh
And measure every grace and fault,
Whose martial nature never turns
From right to left, to halt

For any glamour of the heart,
Or any glow that ever is,
Grander than Truth's high noonday glare,
In love's sweet sunrises;

Who know me by the duller hues
Of common nights and common days,
And in their sober atmospheres
Find level blame and praise.

True hearts and dear! 't is not in you,
This fainting, warring soul of mine
Finds silver carven chalices,
To hold life's choicest wine

Unto its thirsty lips, and bid
It drink, and breathe, and battle on,

Till all its dreams are deeds at last,
And all its heights are won.

I turn to *you*, confiding love.
O lifted eyes! look trustfully,
Till Heaven shall lend you other light,
Like kneeling saints — on me.

And let me be to you, dear eyes,
The thing I am not, till I, too,
Shall see as I am seen, and stand
At last revealed to you.

And let me nobler than I am,
And braver still, eternally,
And finer, truer, purer, than
My finest, purest, be

To your sweet vision. There I stand
Transfigured fair in love's deceit,
And while your soul looks up to mine,
My heart lies at your feet.

Believe me better than my best,
And stronger than my strength can hold,

Until your magic faith transmute
My pebbles into gold.

I'll *be* the thing you hold me, Dear! —
After I 'm dead, if not before —
Nor, through the climbing ages, will
I give the conflict o'er.

But if upon the Perfect Peace,
And past the thing that was, and is,
And past the lure of voices, in
A world of silences,

A pain can crawl — a little one —
A cloud upon a sunlit land;
I think in Heaven my heart must ache —
That you should understand.

A NEW FRIEND.

THE sun is sinking on the sacred lands
Wherein the grain ungarnered beckoning
stands.

Who loses never finds, nor can, nor may,
The common, human glory of the day.

Close, let us enter, tear-blind as we must;
Reapers, not gleaners of a solemn trust.

AN ETCHING.

A TRUE knight! Knowing neither worldly fear,
Nor yet reproach of her unworldly faith;
Fine eyes shall see, yet see not, on this page,
A man, who from a woman's heart of hearts
Could earn, and keep, the sacred name of Friend.

TO MY FATHER.

Tired with the little follies of the day,
A child crept, sobbing, to your arms to say
Her evening prayer; and if by God or you
Forgiven and loved, she never asked or knew.

With life's mistake and care too early old,
And spent with sorrow upon sorrow told,
She finds the father's heart the surest rest;
The earliest love shall be the last and best.

THE GATES BETWEEN.

PEARL-white, opaque and fixèd fast,
Flashing between the hands unclasped,
Blinding between despairing eyes,
The awful Gates shut to, at last,
On comfort snatched, and anguish done,
On every moan beneath the sun,
Till we and ours, and joy are one.

This is your hour, Gates of God,
Your solemn hour, bars of gold,
But there shall come another yet.
Like silken sails you shall be furled,
Like melting mist you shall be set.

Oh, ye the dearest! vanished from
Love's little inner, sheltered spot.
To ye I whisper; not forgot,
But loved the dearer, namèd not.
Across the barrier old as life,
Lean to us from the Silent World.

A PRAYER.

VESPERS.

GREAT God!
Behold, I lie
Beneath Thine awful eye,
As the sea beneath the sky.

My God,
What hope abides?
Thine unknown purpose rides
The torrent of my tides.

Dear God,
I am not a shore, or hill,
An ocean must take still
The colors of the heavens' will.

Choose, God.
Though days be blue, or gold,
Though sorrows new, or cold,

Though purple joy be there,
Or gray of old despair,
Give but Thyself to me,
And let me be Thy sea.
Thy storms have had their way.
I pray now not to pray.

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